

President's Corner Lights Out Baltimore!

by Mark Johnson

Recently, Les Eastman, Jay Rubinoff, and I visited Wendy Olsson to investigate birds collected from the streets of downtown Baltimore during the early sunrise hours this past fall. Wendy is the *Lights Out Baltimore!* coordinator; she and her team of volunteers (Joan Cwi, Keith Costley, Bryce Butler, and many others; see below) strive to get out six days a week at 5 AM to walk a 2.6-mile loop searching for birds that have died as a result of nocturnal collisions with the structures of Baltimore. Between August 15 and October 31, the Lights Out team collected more than 170 individuals of 48 species. These birds will be ultimately submitted to the Smithsonian for their archives.

Les, Jay, and I have been banding birds at Eden Mill for more than a decade, and we were interested in any age-specific differences in the birds collected. Fall migration is typically very productive, given the large proportion of hatching-year birds (those born that year) migrating south. It is generally thought that mortality is high for these relatively inexperienced birds,

continued on page 2



The Maryland Yellowthroat

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2011 CONFERENCE AT WISP McHENRY, GARRETT COUNTY, MAY 20-22

Spring will soon be here and so will the conference. Highlights include **Kevin Dodge's** "Night Sounds" on Friday evening; lots of field trips ably orchestrated by **Kathy Calvert** (kathycalvert1@comcast.net); and the always fun Silent Auction and Raffle presided over by **Maryanne Dolan** (Maryanne.dolan@gmail.com).

This year the beneficiary of our Silent Auction and Raffle will be the Allegheny Highlands Conservancy. As it turns out, the Conservancy's President is *Kevin Dodge*, our keynote speaker. Among its accomplishments, the Conservancy actively and successfully opposed opening Maryland state lands to commercial wind power development, a position shared by MOS. Check out the AHC website at www.alleghenyhighlandsconservancy.org.

This year, for the first time, the conference will have a corporate sponsor—Tropical Birding. Tropical Birding leads bird, wildlife, and photography tours all over the world—Asia, Africa, Australasia, and Central and South America, as well as Mexico, the US, and Canada. Check out their sophisticated website at www.tropicalbirding.com.

At WISP, two members of the Tropical Birding staff will present workshops combined with field work. On Saturday morning **Christian Boix** will conduct

a workshop focused on digiscoping. Lecture and demonstration will be followed by a 1½-hour, outdoor, hands-on session to allow everyone to put their newly acquired skills and theories into practice. Participants will also be able to test drive some of the latest equipment (cameras, telescopes, tripods, and adaptors). Then it's back to the classroom to analyze and review a series of shots. The workshop will also introduce some basic photo-editing and -enhancing skills. By the end of this workshop, you will have been given a demonstration of how to choose the right gear, how to use it, and how to process your photos.

continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

President's Corner	1
2011 Conference.....	1
Atlas Update	1
Rarity Roundup	3
YMOs Summer Program	3
Chapter Chatter	4
Birds of Note.....	6
Great Backyard Bird Count.....	7
2011 Scholarship Program	8
Winter Bird Counts	8
Conservation Connection.....	9
Calendar	10
Book Review: <i>Audubon</i>	16
Last Call.....	16

ATLAS ON HORIZON

At the December 4 Board Meeting, an elated Jane Coskren showed off an advance copy of the eagerly awaited *Second Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia*. The handsome book, which apparently has already won a design award, found an enthusiastic audience. As of press time, the bulk of the order was still aboard ship, sailing our way, due to arrive at the Johns Hopkins University Press warehouses in mid-December, ready for holiday giving.

President's Corner *continued from page 1*

though data for most species of songbirds are lacking. Additionally, there is a positive relationship between age and reproductive success, in that older birds typically arrive at breeding grounds earlier, have larger clutch sizes, and defend and produce more young than first-year parents (second-year birds). Banding data in the Mid-Atlantic region show that in the fall, hatching-year birds comprise over 70% of those captured for most species. Since few data are available on the age of birds that die as a result of these collisions, we were interested in using banding techniques to age those collected by Wendy and her crew.

Species diversity was amazing to us, particularly for the downtown area of Baltimore. American Woodcock (4), Northern Saw-whet Owl, Wilson's Warbler, Scarlet Tanager (2), Gray-cheeked Thrush (2), Black-throated Green Warbler, Golden-crowned

Kinglet, Connecticut Warbler, and a female Cooper's Hawk were among those collected. Generally, we relied on molt differences to age the birds, along with other measurements and observations. Although the data are still under review, it appears that the proportion of older birds was much higher than expected. This is particularly troubling since these are likely some of the most reproductively productive individuals in the populations of their respective species. We hope to complete our aging of the remaining birds soon, conduct a more recent literature review, and get this information out in print.

We would like to thank Wendy and her husband Rob for their hospitality and for shuttling the many birds from freezer to freezer, and to thank all of those involved in the effort. The other volunteers who give their time (often before work) are Maire Doyle, Mary Shock, Mike Stahl, John Landers, Joanne Pettinichio, and Judy Harding. Thanks to your efforts, we are hopeful that downtown Baltimore will comply and adapt more bird-friendly practices that will reduce bird mortality during these important migration periods.

Conference *continued from page 1*

On Saturday afternoon, **Ken Behrens** will offer a birding by ear workshop, with an emphasis on migration chip calls. This workshop will address birding by ear, recording, and analyzing songs. May and migration is a perfect time to cue into birdsong; flyover birds are as chirpy as ever, as they keep in contact with other flock members while on the wing in the dark of night. This workshop will cover the basic tools of bird call identification, emphasizing differences in pitch, quality, length, tempo, volume, and repetitions. Ken will also review various field guides and audio resources for identifying such calls. Ken and Christian will also demonstrate how to record and analyze bird song, store it, and access it for future reference. They will also introduce you to *xeno-canto*, an amazing Internet resource for bird vocalizations.

A field trip for chip notes is scheduled for Saturday evening. Along with Ken and Christian, we will sit quietly, under cover of darkness, listening for chipping notes high in the skies. If we are lucky and overflying birds are vocalizing, Ken and Christian will try to cue into the migrants' calls to apply what we have learned in the classroom.

On Sunday morning, Christian and Ken will expand on "How to Bird the World Most Effectively on a Budget." Tropical Birding will also set up a table next to our meeting room to display tour information. Christian and Ken will man the table and field your questions during the Wine & Cheese Social and when not otherwise busy with workshops. Stop by and say hi.

And one more workshop: Don't forget that **Mark Johnson**, our President, will be presenting "An Introduction to Birdwatching" on Friday afternoon and following it up with a field trip on Saturday.

Spots for all of these programs and field trips are limited. Register early to ensure a place.

As you can see, it's going to be a very busy conference. Make plans now to attend.

—Janet Shields
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Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas that would be of interest to other birders. Copy may be mailed or e-mailed to Lydia Schindler by January 20, 2011 for the March/April 2011 issue.

*Illustrations pp. 1, 4 © M. Suzanne Probst.
Photograph p. 3 © Tom Feild.
Photograph p. 7 © Bill Hubick.*

WORCESTER COUNTY RARITY ROUNDUP 2010

Maryland's Rarity Roundup, now in its 11th year, took place on Saturday, November 13. The event is similar to any formal bird count, with one main exception. The primary goal is to detect rare species. If a mega-rarity is found during the count, all participants are encouraged to abandon their territories and give chase. The event was originally started by Marshall Iliff; today it is organized by Bill Hubick, Matt Hafner, and Mark Hoffman.

The 2010 event was a success, but it again faced challenges due to weather. Tides were again very high, limiting access to some key coastal sites. Several of the landings required serious work, and the OSV zone on Assateague was closed. Most participants agreed that sustained winds from the northeast appeared to have severely impacted the arrival of new birds.

That said, the participants found some exceptional birds. With a new high of 40 participants, we had excellent coverage for all of Worcester County. The weather was beautiful for the extended weekend, and the camaraderie impossible to beat. The count stimulated the local economy with untold numbers of Wawa visits and festivities at Plaza Tapatia Mexican restaurant.

The top birds of the Rarity Roundup were Yellow Rail (Vaughn North), Northern Shrike (Assateague Island/Bayside), American White Pelican



Black-legged Kittiwake, resting on the beach about 3 miles north of the access road to Assateague Island. It had an injured foot and possibly an injured wing as well, but it could fly. Photo: Tom Feild, Howard County.

(Sinepuxent Bay), and a roosting Black-legged Kittiwake (Assateague Island/North End). While each of these is exciting, none was very cooperative with chase attempts. Other species of note included Common Eider, Harlequin Duck, American Golden-Plover, Piping Plover, Marbled Godwit, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Vesper Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, Saltmarsh Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting, and Indigo Bunting. This wasn't "The Big One," the Rarity Roundup that will find a new state record or two, but that's just a matter of time!

—Bill Hubick
Anne Arundel Bird Club



YMOS Summer Program
Maryland Birds and Habitat
June 19-24, 2011 at Washington College
For educators and youth birders, incoming grades 8 - 12

Deadline for application is March 31, 2011.

Information and application forms are available on the MOS web site. They can also be obtained from George Radcliffe at radclifg@gmail.com. MOS members should make a point of getting this information into the hands of any potentially interested students or educators.



ANNE ARUNDEL

Congratulations to *Marilyn Taylor*. On Saturday, October 30, she was one of several volunteers to receive the Ron Blake Outstanding Volunteer Award at the grand opening of the Kinder Farm Park Visitor Center. Marilyn and her committee of devoted assistants have worked hard to improve the habitat of Generals Highway Corridor Park by building and planting a rain garden, creating two woodland trails, and planting many native plants, shrubs, and trees. Bluebird houses were installed, as well as a kiosk and several benches along the trail. The work was carried out with the help of several Eagle Scouts, county employees, and occasional additional volunteers. Marilyn is the creative genius behind this project and the constant spark of energy for her entire team of volunteers, and she continues to plan for future projects.

—*Bobbi Reichwein*

CAROLINE COUNTY

Caroline County Bird Club is planning to celebrate its 60th Anniversary on Thursday, March 17, at 7:30 PM in the Caroline County Public Library, 100 Market Street in Denton. Tentative plans are to present a history of the club and to give a slide show of old club photos and a history of the Christmas Bird Count through the years. Anyone with stories or old photos about the club or founding members please contact Danny Poet (birder231@hotmail.com) or Debby Bennett

(dbennett@carolib.org). Mark your calendars and come join in the fun.

—*Danny Poet*

HARFORD COUNTY

New Zealand doesn't immediately come to mind as a hot birding spot, but it is home to some of the world's rarest and most endangered species. In November, *Lynn Feryus* and *Jean Wheeler* traveled with Naturalist Journeys to this unique island country. We landed in Auckland on the North Island and then flew to Rotorua, a city within a caldera. With its geothermal activity of geysers, fumaroles, and mud pots, the terrain reminded us of Yellowstone. However, the native flora is unlike anything in the US. We began to learn about Manuka and Kanuka (the tea trees), Podocarps, Kauri, and many other native plants and trees.

The birds are special, too. About 45 endemic species live on the three main islands. Because New Zealand broke off from Gondwana before mammals had evolved, the only native mammals were two species of bats. Free of ground-dwelling predators, many endemic birds became flightless. Man, from the Maori to Europeans, brought rats, possums, ferrets, stoats, and other rodents. These animals quickly found the flightless Kiwi, Weka, Takahe, and Kokapo easy prey. Many species have been lost forever.

New Zealanders are committed to preventing further extinctions and increasing the populations of their rare species. To that end many smaller islands have undergone pest eradication to restore the diversity of the forest and the birds. On the N. Island we visited a 47-km-fenced, predator-free enclosure called Maungatautari. The enclosure, which was built by volunteers, is home to many threatened species. We also visited Tiritiri Matangi Island, which has also been rendered pest

free. Here volunteers planted over 200,000 native plants. We saw many native species in this beautiful space, including Rifleman, Saddleback, Stitchbird, and Bellbird. On the South Island, we saw 5 species of albatross on a pelagic out of Kaikoura. We also found 3 species of penguin—Blue, Yellow-eyed, and Fiordland Crested. The latter were sighted while we were on an overnight cruise of Doubtful Sound. The southern Alps are spectacular and they sport the alpine parrot the Kea, while the Kaka is found in the forests. Our group crossed to Stewart Island and visited Ulva Island, another pest-free location. Here we saw many Weka, Yellowhead, and both Yellow-crowned and Red-crowned Parakeets. The highlight of Stewart Island had to be the Kiwi hunting. We spotted a male and a female Brown Kiwi; Lynn has some awesome video of the female probing for bugs. This trip was an adventure from start to finish. We learned much about Maori culture and the unique flora and birds. The trip ended with a hike on the start of the famous Routeburn Track.

—*Jean Wheeler*

HOWARD COUNTY

Howard County's ninth Sparrow Big Day on October 16, 2010, hit the jackpot. After decades of searching, *Bonnie Ott* and company tallied a LeConte's Sparrow at two different sites! (Both birds were photographed.) Of the 11 people who started at the University of Maryland Central Farm as the sun rose above the trees, only five weary souls were still present as the sun dropped at Waterford Farm. The fortunate individuals who saw both birds were Bonnie, *Joe Hanfman*, *Grazina* and *Mike McClure*, and *Kurt Schwarz*. Now that Bonnie's nemesis bird has been added to the county list, what will be her next target species? Golden-crowned Sparrow—at her feeder, of course!

Howard's own *Jeff Culler* was recently mentioned in the publication *North American Birds* for finding a Warbling Vireo on December 15, 2009. Quote from the magazine: "A Warbling Vireo photographed at Ellicott City, Howard, 15 Dec (p.a. JCu) represents an extraordinary winter record; like the fall '09 record from Virginia, it is possible that this bird was of a w.subspecies."

Is Ellicott City a new migrant trap? A block from where the Warbling Vireo was found, Jeff Culler also found and photographed another Howard County rarity, a Black-capped Chickadee. Since November 2, 2010, the bird has been coming to Jeff's feeders. It appears contented and may hang around to enjoy our Howard County hospitality.

In mid-September 2010, *Joe Hanfman* visited west Texas. Birding from El Paso to Big Bend country, he stayed at Cibolo Creek Ranch at the base of the Chinati Mountains. Cibolo Creek Ranch was founded by a 19th-Century cattle baron on the grounds of a US Cavalry outpost, and there's great birding just outside the lodge's excellent rooms. In six days Joe saw 176 species, including Common Black-Hawk, Lesser Nighthawk, Dusky Flycatcher, Virginia's Warbler, and Brewer's Sparrow. Vermillion Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, Cassin's Sparrow, and Lark Bunting were the most common birds, with numerous sightings. Non-bird sightings included javelina, elk, pronghorn, and camels (introduced). A close encounter with a black-tailed rattlesnake added some excitement.

—*Kate Tufts*

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Helen Patton, Stephanie Lovell, and Mike and Joy Bowen spent an enjoyable week of northeast fall birding around the American Birding Association's "Go Bird! Providence" event at the start of October, 2010.

Mike reported: "Traveling in style in Stephanie's new vehicle, we spent a leisurely few days traveling to/from Rhode Island, birding in Delaware, New Jersey, New York (Long Island), and Connecticut in really nice weather on the way north and in New Jersey and Pennsylvania in warm sunshine on the way home. Some northbound bird highlights were: (DE) Eastern Screech-Owl and tons of Savannah Sparrows at Bombay Hook, Saltmarsh and Seaside Sparrows at Mispillion, adult Tricolored Heron and Lesser Black-backed Gull at Fowler's Beach; (NJ) over 200 Snowy Egrets, 80 Black-bellied Plovers, and 4 different Peregrine Falcons at Brigantine; (NY) 120 or more Mute Swans and 10 species of warbler at Jamaica Bay NWR; 2 Merlins and an impressive 150 American Oystercatchers at Jones Beach SP, together with migrating Golden-crowned Kinglets and Red-breasted Nuthatches; (CT) lots of migrants at Hammonasset Beach SP, with 30+ Eastern Phoebe, an immature Little Blue Heron, and a close-in Dunlin at a rain pool.

"The ABA event in RI was plagued by high winds and frequent rains, but that didn't prevent us from seeing lots of good birds: many Common Eider, White-winged and Black Scoters, Horned Grebes, Bobolinks, Scarlet Tanager, and Baltimore Oriole (at the Norman Bird Refuge), White-rumped Sandpipers on the coast, a Clapper Rail and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons at Succotash Marsh, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Trustom Pond. The ABA trips from the mainland to Block Island were repeatedly canceled because of high winds and rough seas. When we eventually sailed, Helen and Mike were practically washed overboard by a huge bow wave.

"Ironically, the weather improved once again on our trip back south to Montgomery County. We stopped off

at Great Swamp NWR in New Jersey, where we visited the October 10 local birders' "Big Sit" and were gratefully pointed towards a nearby Lincoln's Sparrow and a group of Rusty Blackbirds. Later the same day, we visited the Big Sit at the John Heinz NWR near Philadelphia, where we saw many Tree and Rough-winged Swallows, a single Bank Swallow, and the only Green Heron and Blue-winged Teal of our entire trip."

Don Simonson's motto in 2010 was "600 x 60": to see 600 species of birds in the ABA area by his sixtieth birthday in December. He achieved this lifelong dream, adding 45 new species between April and October, ending up with 608 species. Don wrote: "After 45 years of birding, my ABA list had stalled at 563 species. I resolved to remedy this with a birding quest, and to document every new sighting with a drawing made in the field in real time. Alaska would have been an easy way to hit 600 ABA, so to make it harder I decided to do it all in the lower 48. I further vowed to not use any tapes to lure in birds.

"It was a fantastic year, starting with 12 days in extreme Southeast Arizona at the end of April. Every day I explored a different canyon or biome, seeing Lark Bunting, Spotted Owl, Flame-colored Tanager, and Red-faced Warbler. The legendary California Gulch trip for the Five-striped Sparrow was well worth it. One high point was my final night in Portal, when I was surrounded by Flammulated Owls, Elf Owls, and Western Screech-Owls all calling at once. My old mentor Will Russell put me in touch with local expert guides Michael Marsden and Keith Kamper, and I ended up with 23 new species.

"Next trip: the humidity of South Florida in June, birding the Everglades and the Florida Keys for Antillean

Chapter Chatter *continued from page 5*

Nighthawk and exotics, with Carlos Sanchez and Patty Cunningham. I capped off the Florida trip with an outrageous “Toelagic” trip with Roberto “Toe” Torres, in a small open boat in high winds and high seas off Miami. With waves and spray breaking over us, it was tough to make sketches of Band-rumped Storm-Petrels, Brown Booby, Bridled Tern, and Brown Noddy in real time.

“At the end of July, my daughter Lily and I made a lightning raid on Santa Cruz Island, CA. We had only 30 minutes ashore to find the Island Scrub-Jay (species number 594)—and we did it! The big breakthrough came on July 31 aboard the *Condor Express* with a Los Angeles Audubon pelagic. I was delighted to find Montgomery birder par excellence *Paul Pisano* aboard. I was further delighted to discover, 58 miles offshore from Santa Barbara, THE BIRD: a LONG-TAILED JAEGER,

flying directly past the boat 30 yards away, species number 600! Rarities including South Polar Skua, Cook’s Petrel, and Xantus’s Murrelet soon followed, ending the day with 605 species.

“In October, my wife and I iced the cake with a four-day trip to the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. We drove to the farthest northwest point of the continental United States. Looking north to Canada across Clallam Bay, we saw an enormous perfect rainbow. And at one end of the rainbow was a real pot of gold, species number 607: a raft of 25 Tufted Puffins!”

—Chris Wright

TALBOT COUNTY

On Sunday, October 24, I was the Event Manager when Smokey Glen Farm catered the AKRIDGE Company Picnic. At the picnic I asked the chairman if this was the same

company whose owner who lived in the Easton area; I remembered from previous years that the Talbot County Bird Club had scheduled trips to his property, which has been set up with conservation as a high priority. She told me “Yes,” and that *Chip Akridge* would be attending the picnic. After the chairman introduced us, I had a very nice talk with Chip. I told him that I am an avid birder and also a member of the Talbot Chapter of MOS. I mentioned that I knew that the Talbot Co. Chapter has had annual trips scheduled to his property and how nice it was for him to do this. When he learned that I had not been on any of these trips, he immediately invited me to call him anytime that I wanted a personal tour. I thanked him very much for the offer. He spoke very highly of the members of the Talbot Club, and I wanted to pass that on as well. It was really a pleasure for me to meet such a wonderful man! —Jim Green

**Birds of Note**—by Les Roslund

- Visits by vagrant species often provide highlights during autumn migration, and this year was no exception. On October 29 a SAY’S PHOEBE showed up at Terrapin Park in Queen Anne’s County. The lucky finders were two Howard County birders, Jeff Culler who first spotted the bird, at 10:15 AM, and Joe Hanfman who made the call. Joe promptly spread the word, making it possible for several birders to reach the site before the bird departed at 4:35 PM. That was long enough to let Warren Strobel record it as his 300th Maryland species. This was only the third record for the state.
- YELLOW RAILS are so shy and secretive that they typically migrate through our region without being seen. This fall two lucky birders, Jeff Shenot of Croom and John Dennehy of Baltimore, managed to flush and view one in Worcester County during the Rarities Roundup on November 13. Despite intensive efforts, the bird could not be relocated. Back on October 16 another YELLOW RAIL was passing through St. Michaels, Talbot County, but this one did not live to tell the tale.

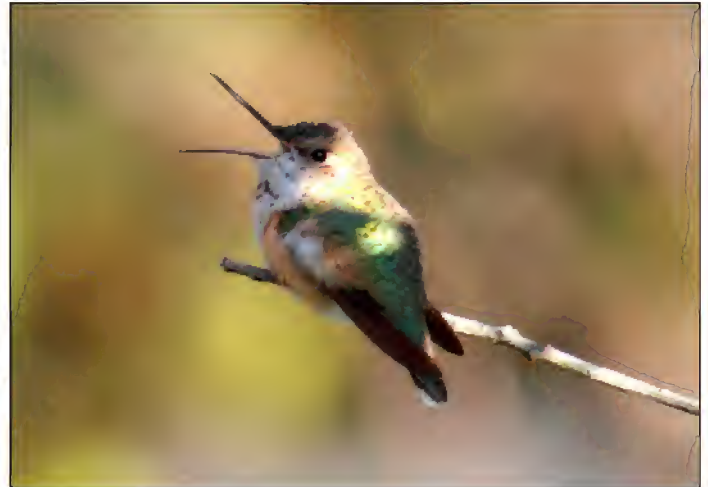
The deceased bird was found beneath some power lines near the home of Jan Reese; though the corpse had been clearly run over several times by auto traffic, Jan was able to restore it to condition suitable for a museum collection. This was only the second record of a YELLOW RAIL passing through Talbot County.

- Continuing with rare sightings, a WESTERN KINGBIRD was found October 8 at the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens in DC. The finder was Tom Jones of Washington, DC, who first located it in the morning and then returned to find it again later in the day. There have been only two previous accepted reports of this species in DC, one in Anacostia in 1979 and the other in Kenilworth Park in 2000.
- YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRDS may not be particularly rare, but they have been very hard to find in our region, so the discovery of one in St. Mary’s County by Patty Craig of Dameron was cause for celebration. The bird, an adult male with a beautiful yellow head, was first seen the afternoon of October 15 in the village

of Scotland, within a flock of BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS and EUROPEAN STARLINGS. Many birders made the trek down to that area in hopes of finding the bird, but the only later report of success came from Tyler Bell and Jane Kostenko of California, MD, who found it on October 17 in the same general region.

- During migration season most birders know that some species of hawks can turn up almost anywhere. This year “almost anywhere” for one NORTHERN GOSHAWK included a flight over Constitution Avenue in DC near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, as reported October 6 on eBird by Mark Mahnke of Maine. Later in the season another NORTHERN GOSHAWK was observed flying over Terrapin Park in Queen Anne’s County. This sighting, on November 10, was reported by Kevin Graff of Jarrettsville, who was accompanied by John Landers and Paul Noell of Baltimore.
- This fall there have been numerous reports of BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES in parts of Maryland where they are not normally seen. One of the most southerly sightings occurred on October 21 when Danny Bystrak and the Patuxent Research Center banding crew caught one in their nets at Patuxent. Mikey Lutmerding was invited to come see the bird, and on his way to the banding site he heard another BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE near by. Through these reports, along with many others in the central and north-central parts of the state, it is clear that this is a very strong irruptive year for the species.
- On November 6 Mark Johnson of Aberdeen found a quite early LAPLAND LONGSPUR along Rumbly Point Road in Somerset County. Three days later Mark returned to the area and successfully relocated the bird. This little creature was very approachable and provided some charming demonstrations of feeding strategy; when the grass stems that held his target seeds were a bit too tall for him to easily reach, he would stand on tiptoe to stretch as high as possible. If that did not work, he went to the base of the grass stalk and literally mashed it with his foot, then moved along the bent stalk to harvest the seeds.
- If this is going to be a good year for irruptions, then folks can start looking for more of the unusual visitors from the north. During a Hart-Miller Island visit on November 8, three observers—Kevin Graff of Jarrettsville, Joe Hanfman of Columbia, and Bob Ringler of Eldersburg—spotted the season’s first WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL. The bird caught the group’s attention through its flight call as it moved from a row of pines into a larger wooded area; all three birders were able to get clear scope views before it disappeared. Hopefully this sighting will be just the first of many this winter.

- Possibly the most rewarding of the fall visitors this season has been a hummingbird that showed up at feeders in College Park, Prince George’s County, in mid-November. On November 21 Rick Borchelt of College Park passed the word to the birding community and began graciously hosting a parade of birders. On November 26 the bird was banded and identified as a female RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD. It continued into mid-December—by which time *every one* of more than 100 birders who had come to look for it had succeeded—usually within the first five minutes.



This extraordinarily cooperative Rufous Hummingbird made itself available to just about everyone who came to look for it. Photo: Bill Hubick, Anne Arundel

14th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count Presidents’ Day Weekend

Any excuse to count birds is welcome for many of us, and this one is good for the birds. The information collected helps conservationists spot trends that need further investigation.

The Great Backyard Bird Count, sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. MOS has been lending their valuable bird ID skills for years. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts, so the count can help your young relatives start a lifelong interest in their environment. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event.

The Count runs from Friday, February 18 through Monday, February 21. See www.birdcount.org for interesting and colorful information on how to participate.

2011 MOS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

BY TOM STRIKWERDA

The Maryland Ornithological Society is accepting applications from Maryland teachers, park rangers, and youth leaders for scholarships to attend summer ecology and ornithology workshops on Hog Island, Maine. Awards cover tuition, room, and board for an intensive week of field study and instruction in ecology, ornithology, conservation, or natural history. Travel expenses to and from the workshops are the responsibility of the recipient. Each year MOS awards approximately 10 scholarships.

At this time, there are four different opportunities for scholarships. Updates or additions to choices for 2011 will be posted on the MOS web site (www.mdbirds.org) as they become available.

Maine Seabird Biology &

Conservation—May 29 to June

3 or September 11 to September 16: A hands-on workshop to take an active part in helping to restore Maine seabirds by joining pioneering researcher, Dr. Stephen Kress, and other *Project Puffin* biologists with National Audubon Society's

internationally renowned Seabird Restoration Program.

Joy of Birding—June 12 to June 17:

An opportunity for less experienced educators to hone their birding skills with some of America's top birders, including famed author Pete Dunne, while reveling in more than 300 species of New England birds, from warblers and thrushes to puffins and guillemots.

Field Ornithology—June 19 to June

24: This workshop is appropriate for the more experienced birder who also meets the other requirements for a scholarship. Take a week of riveting field trips to habitats as diverse as offshore puffin islands, windswept blueberry barrens, lush grasslands, and sphagnum bog forests.

Sharing Nature: An Educator's

Week—July 14 to July 19: New this year, this workshop would likely be very appropriate for those educators looking for help in developing ideas for science education. Designed for both science and non-science educators, this session will

generate exciting ideas for creating and incorporating environmental education activities into your curriculum and teaching.

The primary eligibility requirement for a scholarship is that applicants must work with young people in Maryland and intend to make nature education a part of their careers. Additional requirements and information are available on the MOS web site. Applications for the 2011 workshops are due by January 31, 2011. The Scholarship Committee evaluates candidates during February and winners are notified in March.

Please direct questions and submit applications to Tom Strikwerda, Chair of the MOS Scholarship Committee (301-942-2841, tom.strikwerda@verizon.net).

All chapter presidents and representatives are urged to disseminate this information as widely as possible to all educators and youth leaders in the state. A broad base of applicants is needed to ensure wide participation and quality candidates in the selection process.

2011 MID-WINTER AND OTHER WINTER COUNTS

Sunday, January 9

AUDREY CARROLL MID-WINTER COUNT. **Frederick.** Meet at the sanctuary at 6:30 AM. Dress warmly with waterproof boots. Contact David Smith, 410-549-7082 or lacsmith12@comcast.net, for info.

Saturday, January 15

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Carroll.** Parties of counters will set their own schedules in their pre-arranged areas, to count resident and late migrant bird species throughout the county. Tally Rally will be hosted by Pat and Bill Ellis at their home; contact Bill to verify your bird-counting area at billellis@ellislist.

com or 443-520-8809, and to say if you will be attending the Tally. Please bring a cash donation or a food item.

Sunday, January 16

FRED ARCHIBALD MID-WINTER COUNT. **Frederick.** Meet at the sanctuary at 6:30 AM. Dress warmly and wear waterproof boots. Contact Bob Schaefer, 301-831-5660 or VicePres@FrederickBirdClub.org, for info.

Saturday, January 22

C&O CANAL COUNT. **Allegany, Washington, Frederick, Montgomery Counties, and DC.** Contact Peter Vankevich at petevankevich@gmail.com

or 202-468-2871 for a stretch of the canal to cover. Each mile of the canal is counted separately. Make-up date will be Jan 23 if the weather is bad. If weather is extraordinarily bad (like winter '09-'10), count will be run following weekend. For Washington County, please contact county coordinator Shirley Ford at 301-241-3020.

Saturday, January 29

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Baltimore.** To participate in post-migration bird count in your choice of location in Balt. City or Co, contact, Pete Webb, 410-486-1217 (h), 410-904-6314 (m), or pete_webb@juno.com.



The Conservation Connection by Kurt Schwarz

The issue of global warming remains controversial, despite the fact that the National Academies of Science have announced it is a reality and likely human-generated (see <http://dels-old.nas.edu/basc/climate-change/>).

The warming, in turn, has already shown an effect on birds—specifically, they are shrinking in size! A study at the Powdermill Avian Research Center in Pennsylvania of banding records over a span of 46 years (1961-2006) has documented a decline in body mass of 3.6% in wintering birds and 1.3% in spring migrants, with shrinkage of wing chord length of 0.6% in spring and autumn migrants and 1% in wintering birds. Long-distance neotropical migrants underwent the most dramatic declines in body mass, with Yellow-breasted Chats shrinking 4.5%, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks 4%, Kentucky Warblers 3.3%, and Scarlet Tanagers 2.3%.

The mechanism that is likely causing our songbirds to shrink is known as Bergman's rule, which describes the phenomenon that within a given species, those populations in warmer

climates tend to be smaller than those inhabiting colder areas. Larger masses retain heat better than smaller ones, since the ratio of surface area to body mass declines as size increases. The study found no evidence that the decline in sizes could have been caused by declines in habitat quality, resulting in inhibited growth. Meanwhile, weather stations in the birds' breeding locations have documented increasingly warmer summers. (See "Breeding Birds Are Shrinking," BIRDING, September 2010.)

A similar study done at Australian National University of 517 museum specimen skins of eight species showed a decline of up to 4% in four species. The researchers also looked at feather length, which would be an indicator nutritional status and habitat quality, and found it did not change, leaving it likely the warming climate was the cause. (Reported in *Science News*; I have a clipping, but it does not include the date, etc.)

One of the arguments used against placing limits on carbon dioxide emissions is that they would allegedly cripple our economy. Anyone

who has been paying attention to environmental issues for the past several decades will recall that the same arguments were levied against controls of sulfur dioxide and chlorinated fluorocarbons (CFCs). Despite the claims that controlling these emissions would bring an end to the western economy as we know it, we have since brought these emissions largely under control. Acid rain (from sulfur dioxide) and the eroding ozone layer (caused by CFCs) have been largely mitigated. And yet the economy kept humming along, at least until the Great Credit Meltdown of 2008-09. In fact, in the case of CFCs, the chemical industry itself, after initially resisting controls, came to endorse them. The American Physical Society has published an inspiring story, which draws parallels between the CFC story and climate change. It would behoove industry leaders and policy makers to review this story and perhaps draw inspiration from it, and seek to move beyond the divisive politics of today. (See <http://www.aps.org/units/fps/newsletters/201001/hobson.cfm>.)

Sunday, January 30

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Frederick.** Contact David Smith, 410-549-7082 or lacsmith12@comcast.net to sign up. Tally Rally at the Smith's.

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Harford.** Contact the local compiler, Mark Johnson, 410-692-5978 or mark.s.johnson@us.army.mil, to participate in this opportunity to assess bird life quantity in Harford. Feeder counters are especially welcome.

Saturday, February 5

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Anne Arundel.** Take the day off from your usual chores and spend the day at your favorite birding spot hunting down

and counting all the birds you can find. Coordinator/Compiler: David Gillum, 410-266-5672 or dagmapper@verizon.net.

MID-WINTER COUNT. Garrett.

Contact compiler Mikey Lutmerding, mlutmerding@gmail.com or 301-707-7764 (cell), for more info and to get a territory.

MID-WINTER COUNT. Howard.

Compilers: Joe Hanfman, aak1844@comcast.net or 410-772-8424, and Joe Byrnes, LBRoller@verizon.net.

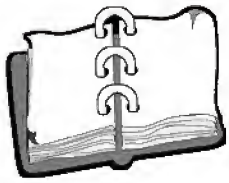
Sunday, February 6

MID-WINTER COUNT. **Kent.** Full day. Join the field crew or count in your

neighborhood, anywhere in Kent Co. For more info, contact Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@baybroadband.net.

Friday-Monday, February 18-21

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT. Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes on one or more days and reporting the sightings online at www.birdsource.org/gbbc/. Additional online resources include tips to help identify birds, a photo gallery, and special materials for educators.



MOS Calendar

January-February 2011

Saturday, January 1

H Baltimore. Loch Raven. Start the New Year birding. Varied habitats including woods, fields, and the reservoir. Probably also birding other sites for a "Big Day" in Baltimore City and Co. Meet 8:30 AM along Stone Hill Rd. All cars need to park on the same side of the road. Leader: Kevin Graff, 410-557-2456 or whitemarlin2001@yahoo.com.

H Harford. Get your 2011 birding list off to an early start. Contact Tom Gibson at gibsonlld@aol.com for trip location, time, and further details.

H Howard. Start Your 2011 List. Half day. Plan to carpool to different locations to find as many species as possible. The one day of the year where every bird is new! Meet 8 AM at boat ramp of Centennial Park. Expect moderate walking. Possibility of lunch stop, depending on the weather. Facilities at some spots. Leader: Bonnie Ott, 410-461-3361.

H Montgomery. Earliest Bird Walk, Georgetown Reservoir and DC Hotspots. Half day. Start the New Year right. Meet 8 AM at Georgetown Reservoir, NW DC, by the gate leading to the dike between the pools. Reservations required. Limit: 20. Leader: Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com.

Sunday, January 2

CHRISTMAS COUNT. Patuxent River.

CHRISTMAS COUNT. Sugarloaf Mountain.

CHRISTMAS COUNT. Fort Belvoir.

CHRISTMAS COUNT. Annapolis-Gibson Island.

Wednesday, January 5

H Baltimore. First Wednesdays at Fort McHenry. Monthly survey of bird activity at the wetland. Scopes useful. Automatically cancelled in bad weather (rain, sleet, snow, fog, etc). [From I-695 southwest of the city, take I-95 north (exit 11) towards the city. Get off at exit 55, Hanover St. Turn right (east) on McComas St, left (north) on Key Hwy. Take first left onto Lawrence St and turn left onto Fort Ave, continue through gateway into the park. Meet outside the Visitor Center at 8 AM. Leader: Mary Chetelat, 410-665-0769.

Thursday, January 6

H Frederick. First Thursdays. Leader and destination TBA. Meet at Baker Park by Culler Lake at 8 AM. Return at approximately 11 AM. For info, please contact Pat Caro, 301-845-6246.

MEETING. Frederick. Our own *Mike Welch* will describe his recent adventures in Singapore and Indonesia. 6 PM at the C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick.

Friday, January 7

MEETING. Anne Arundel. 8 PM at Arlington Echo Outdoor Education Center. "Beginning a New Life—The Craftons' Seven-Year Circumnavigation of the Earth." *Tom Crafton and family.* After many years of living in Alaska, Tom Crafton's family left Severna Park to sail about the world in their 43' sailboat, *Nueva Vida (New Life)*. For add'l info, contact Gerald Winegrad, gwwabc@comcast.net.

DINNER MEETING. Harford. *Frank Marsden* presents "The Ramblings of an Eden Mill Naturalist and Wannabe Wildlife Photographer." 7 PM at Churchville Presbyterian Church. Contact Dave Webb at 410-939-3537 or porzana@comcast.net for add'l info. Inclement weather date is Jan 14.

Saturday, January 8

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY. Carroll. Once again hosted by Splinter and Sue Yingling at 70 Ridge Rd in Westminster. If you've never attended before, now's the time to start. Everyone has a good time. 7:30 PM until ? For more info and to coordinate your potluck dish, contact Sue Yingling at 410-857-0902 or syingling@mac.com.

H Kent. Kick off your birding year with a half-day at Eastern Neck NWR for waterfowl, eagles, and winter land birds. Meet 8 AM at Dollar General Store parking lot, Chestertown. Leaders: Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@baybroadband.net.

Sunday, January 9

COVERED DISH DINNER AND LECTURE. Baltimore. Note new location! 5 PM at Vollmer Center at Cylburn. Tonight's featured talk: "Trogons and Motmots: A February Trip to the West Coast of Mexico around San Blas: Mangroves, Mountains, and Beaches" with *Kurt Schwarz* from the Howard Bird Club. Please contact Joan Cwi in advance, 410-467-5352 or jafjsc@verizon.net, to let her know you are coming, and what you plan to bring.

AUDREY CARROLL MID-WINTER COUNT. Frederick. Meet at the Sanctuary at 6:30 AM. Dress warmly, with waterproof boots. Contact David Smith, 410-549-7082 or lacsmith12@comcast.net, for info.

H Harford. Lower Susquehanna River Valley. Bird from Havre de Grace north to Conowingo and down the Cecil shore. Expect eagles, waterfowl, sparrows, and more. Meet at Tydings Park at 8 AM. Contact Tom Gibson for further info at 410-734-4135 or gibsonlld@aol.com.

H Montgomery. Western County Winter Mixed Bag. 3/4 to full day. Dress for the weather. Trip may involve a total of 3-4 miles walked by day's end. Reservations required. Contact leader for meeting time and place. Leader: Andy Martin, 301-529-2066 or apmartin2@comcast.net.

H Tri-County. MD and DE Coasts. Full day. Search for winter specialties and perhaps a rarity from recent CBCs. Bring a lunch. Meet 7:30 AM Ward Museum parking lot. Contact leader, Sam Dyke, 410-742-5497, for directions and more details.

Tuesday, January 11

MEETING. **Allegany/Garrett.** *Donnelle Keech*, The Nature Conservancy's Allegany Forests Project Director, will discuss "Forest Habitat Conservation in Western MD and the Central Appalachians." 7 PM in Rm 327, Compton Hall, Frostburg State U., Frostburg.

Thursday, January 13

MEETING. **Howard.** "Maryland's Secretive Marsh Birds: Will They Survive Sea Level Rise?" by *David Brinker*, MD DNR. Using survey studies done in the '90's and updated MD/DC Atlas data, a prediction can be made about coastal area changes in 60-100 years. Hospitality and club bookstore 7:30 PM; meeting/program 8 PM at Howard Co Rec and Parks, 7210 Oakland Mills Rd, Columbia. Info: Ward Ebert, 301-490-5807.

Friday-Monday, January 14-17

H Montgomery. Introduction to the Winter Shore: Ocean City to Broadkill Marsh. Full day. We'll brave winter's icy blasts for the chance to see some seasonal specialties: scoters, eiders, Harlequin Duck, loons, Bonaparte's Gull, and Purple Sandpiper. New members and new birders are encouraged but all are welcome. Reservations required. Limit: 14. Carpooling strongly encouraged. For reservations, info, and directions call Mike Bowen, 301-530-5764 or dhmbowen@yahoo.com.

Saturday, January 15

H Baltimore. Saturday Monitoring Walks at Fort McHenry. Continuing survey of bird activity at the Fort. Scope can be useful. Automatically cancelled in bad weather (rain, sleet, snow, fog, etc). Meet 8 AM in the park, outside the Visitor Center. [From I-95, take Hanover St exit 55, McComas St (last exit before tunnel eastbound, first after tunnel westbound) east, left (north) on Key Hwy, which turns west, first left Lawrence St, left (east) on Fort Ave, continue east to gate into Fort McHenry. From the JFX, I-83, south to St Paul St exit, south on St Paul becomes Light St, then left (east) onto Fort Avenue, continue to end as above. Park outside the Fort (on the left just before the gate) on the lot along Wallace St.] Leader: Jim Peters, 410-429-0966.

✳ MID-WINTER COUNT. **Carroll.** Parties of counters will set their own schedules in their pre-arranged areas, to count resident and late migrant bird species throughout the county. Tally Rally will be hosted by Pat and Bill Ellis at their home; contact Bill to verify your bird-count area at billellis@ellislist.com or 443-520-8809, and to confirm that you will be attending the Tally. Please bring a cash donation or a food item.

H Harford. Annual Winter Feeder Tour. Enjoy birding out of the elements as we watch feeders at three of our members' cozy homes. Contact Marian Argentino at MJD405@aol.com for details.

Sunday, January 16

H Anne Arundel. ANNAPOLIS NECK AND THOMAS PT WATERFOWL AND SOUP SPECIAL. Meet 12 PM. Reservations required by Jan 9. Meet at Bay Ridge Shopping Ctr, across from Quiet Waters Park. Contact leader/host Gerald Weingrad, 410-280-8956, for more info.

✳ FRED ARCHIBALD MID-WINTER COUNT. **Frederick.** Meet at the sanctuary at 6:30 AM. Dress warmly and wear waterproof boots. Contact Bob Schaefer, 301-831-5660 or VicePres@FrederickBirdClub.org, for info.

Wednesday, January 19

MEETING. **Montgomery.** "Brazil." Through the Partners of the Americas exchange program, join naturalist *Greg Kearns* touring Rio de Janeiro, the Carnival capital of the world, and see the top 10 nature and historical attractions. Then tour the largest wetland in the world, the Pantanal, and end in Iguassu Falls on the Argentine border, one of the world's most spectacular! 7:30 PM at Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Rd, Potomac. For more info, contact Steve Pretl at stevep@takomavillage.org.

Thursday, January 20

MEETING. **Caroline.** Movie night: "Hummingbirds." 7:30 PM, Caroline Co Public Library, 100 Market St, Denton. Popcorn and drinks on the house. For add'l info, contact Debby Bennett at firefly5845@hotmail.com.

Calendar *continued from page 11***Friday-Saturday, January 21-22****MOS STATEWIDE EDUCATION**

SEMINAR. A new series of statewide Education Seminars. First up, "Gull Identification Seminar/Field Trip" with *Clive Harris*. The Fri evening lecture and slide show will begin at 7 PM at the Hampton Inn, Elkton, followed by an 8 AM field trip Sat morning to the Cecil Co Landfill. Cost: \$20/person. Reservations required by Jan 6. Limit: 40 persons. Please see your Nov/Dec 2010 *Maryland Yellowthroat* (also available at <http://www.mdbirds.org/publications/yellowthroat/pdf/yt3005.pdf>) for details on how to register and reserve local accommodations if needed. For add'l info, please contact Maryanne Dolan at Maryanne.dolan@gmail.com or 410-398-7567.

Saturday, January 22

✿ **C&O CANAL COUNT. Allegany, Washington, Frederick, Montgomery Counties, and DC.** Contact Peter Vankevich at petevankevich@gmail.com or 202-468-2871 for a stretch of the Canal to cover. Each mile is counted separately. Make-up date will be Jan 23 if the weather is bad. If weather is extraordinarily bad (like winter '09-'10), count will be run following weekend. For Washington County, please contact county coordinator Shirley Ford at 301-241-3020.

🏠 **Harford.** Cambridge/Blackwater Waterfowl Trip. Search for unusual wintering waterfowl in the Cambridge harbor area, Blackwater NWR, and Hooper's Island, site of recent sightings of Tufted Duck and Barrow's Goldeneye. Meet at the Rte 155/I-95 P&R at 7 AM. Leaders are Tom Congersky, 410-658-4137 or jnjtcon@zoominternet.net, and Randy Robertson.

🏠 **Kent.** Ocean City, Worcester County. Our annual search for winter specialties including gannet, sea ducks, alcids, gulls,

Purple Sandpiper, and wintering songbirds. Full day. Dress warmly, bring lunch and warm beverages. Meet 8 AM at Dollar General Store parking lot, Chestertown. Leaders: Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@baybroadband.net.

🏠 **Tri-County.** Dorchester County. Blackwater NWR and other spots in so. Dorchester Co for waterfowl, eagles, and other raptors. Bring snacks and drinks. Meet 7:30 AM in Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art parking lot on S Schumaker Dr on Beaglin Park Dr in Salisbury. Leader TBD. For more info, contact Betty Pitney at 410-543-1853.

Sunday, January 23

🏠 **Anne Arundel.** Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary. Wetland birds and Wildlife Drive. Meet 8 PM at Parole P&R. Leader: Kim Hudyma, 410-859-8490 or kim.hudyma@verizon.net.

Monday, January 24

MEETING. Tri-County. Program TBA. 7 PM at Asbury Methodist Church, Fox Rm, south entrance, Camden Ave, Salisbury. For more info, contact Betty Pitney at 410-543-1853.

Tuesday, January 25

POT LUCK DINNER AND MEETING. Washington. Mount Aetna Nature Center. Pot Luck starts at 6 PM. Bring a dish to share along with your own drink, plate, and utensils. Meeting follows at 7 PM with members' night. Bring short presentations, photos, stories, or anything of interest to share with your birding friends. Call 301-797-8454 for directions.

Saturday, January 29

🏠 **Anne Arundel.** Downs, Weinberg, and Ft. Smallwood Parks. Meet 7:30 AM at Severna Park P&R, Corner of Jones Station Rd and Ritchie

Hwy. Wintering waterfowl and other winter visitors. Leader: Sue Ricciardi, 410-647-9513. \$6/car fee x2 or \$40 Yearly Pass.

✿ **MID-WINTER COUNT. Baltimore.** To participate in post-migration bird count in your choice of location in Balt. City or Co, call Pete Webb, 410-486-1217 (h), 410-904-6314 (m), or pete_webb@juno.com.

🏠 **Montgomery.** Waterfowl for Beginners at Black Hill RP. Learn and review the basics of duck ID at this premier county spot for winter waterfowl. The trip will be geared to new birders but all are welcome. Bring a scope if you have one. Meet 7:30 AM at the pull-off next to the south side of Rte 121 bridge. Half day. No reservations needed. For more info or directions, call the leader, Dave Powell, 301-540-8776.

Sunday, January 30

✿ **MID-WINTER COUNT. Frederick.** Contact David Smith, 410-549-7082 or lacsmit12@comcast.net, to sign up. Tally Rally at the Smiths'.

✿ **MID-WINTER COUNT. Harford.** Contact the local compiler, Mark Johnson, 410-692-5978 or mark.s.johnson@us.army.mil, to participate in this opportunity to assess bird life quantity in our area. Feeder counters are especially welcome.

Tuesday, February 1

MEETING. Baltimore. Tuesday Evening Lecture at Cylburn's Greenhouse Classroom, 4915 Greenspring Ave. Colonial Waterbird Survey update by program director *David Brinker*, Reg Dir at Patterson Park in Balt. Doors open at 7 PM for socializing and snacks, show starts about 7:15 PM. Note: Meeting cancelled if Balt City schools are closed that day for snow. When in doubt, check with lecture chairman Pete Webb,

410-486-1217 (h), 410-904-6314 (m), or pete_webb@juno.com.

Wednesday, February 2

Baltimore. First Wednesdays at Fort McHenry. See Jan 5 listing. Meet 8 AM at Visitor Center. Leader: Mary Chetelat, 410-665-0769.

MEETING. **Carroll.** Program TBA. 7:30 PM at South Carroll Senior Center, 5928 Mineral Hill Rd, Eldersburg. Contact Dave Harvey, 410-795-3117, for more info.

Thursday, February 3

Frederick. First Thursdays. Leader and destination TBA. Meet at Baker Park by Culler Lake at 8 AM. Return at approximately 11 AM. For info, please contact Pat Caro, 301-845-6246.

MEETING. **Frederick.** Our speaker will be *Kent Minichiello*, conservation philosopher, photographer, and naturalist, on the "Natural History of Dolly Sods and the Canaan Valley." 6 PM at the C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick.

Friday, February 4

MEETING. **Anne Arundel.** "Bring in the Birds! Landscaping for Birds: What You Can Do to Attract Birds and Other Wildlife around Your Grounds." *Britt Slattery*, Associate Director for Audubon MD-DC. 8 PM at Arlington Echo Outdoor Education Center, 975 Indian Landing Rd, Millersville.

Saturday, February 5

✿ MID-WINTER COUNT. **Anne Arundel.** Take the day off from your usual chores and spend the day at your favorite birding spot hunting down and counting all the birds you can find. Coordinator/Compiler: David Gillum, 410-266-5672 or dagmapper@verizon.net.

✿ MID-WINTER COUNT. **Garrett.** Contact compiler Mikey Lutmerding, mlutmerding@gmail.com or 301-707-7764 (c), for more info and to get a territory.

✿ MID-WINTER COUNT. **Howard.** Compilers: Joe Hanfman, auk1844@comcast.net or 410-772-8424, and Joe Byrnes, LBRoller@verizon.net.

Harford. Bradenbaugh Flats. Enjoy a tour through NW Harford Co's agricultural area to find wintering field birds and waterfowl. Expect Horned Larks, Ring-necked Ducks, with possible Cackling Goose, longspurs, and Snow Buntings. Meet at Jarrettsville ES at 8 AM. The trip ends at the leader's house with hot soup. Contact Dennis Kirkwood, 410-692-5905 or dkirkw@verizon.net, for further info.

Frederick. Conowingo. Half to 3/4 day trip. We will visit this extraordinary spot to see eagles and gulls, plus wintering water birds from up north. Leader: Marcia Balestri, 301-473-5098.

Sunday, February 6

✿ MID-WINTER COUNT. **Kent.** Full day. Join the field crew or count in your neighborhood, anywhere in Kent Co. Contact Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@baybroadband.net, for more info.

Montgomery. Black Hill RP. 3/4 day. We'll focus on identifying winter waterfowl on the lake, but look for landbirds, too. Short easy walks with car jaunts in between. Area can be windy so dress appropriately. Scopes are helpful. Reservations required. Limit: 10. Meet 7:30 AM at the pull-off next to south side of Rte 121 bridge. Leader: Andy Martin, apmartin2@comcast.net or 301-529-2066 (m).

Tuesday, February 8

MEETING. **Allegany/Garrett.** 7 PM in Rm 327 Compton Hall, Frostburg State U, Frostburg. Speaker: *David Yeany II*, Audubon MD-DC. Topic: "Important Bird Areas: From Citizen Science to Bird Conservation."

Wednesday, February 9

MEETING. **Montgomery.** "Important Bird Areas: Making the Connection between Birders and Bird Conservation." From the Program Coordinator *David Yeany*, hear the results of recent Bird Blitz surveys across MD, learn about newly identified IBAs, and find out what Audubon is doing to protect our birds and their habitats across the state. 7:30 PM at Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Rd, Potomac. For more info, contact Steve Pretl at stevep@takomavillage.org.

Thursday, February 10

MEETING. **Howard.** "The Robinson Nature Center, Its History and Future," by *Mark Raab*, Howard Dept of Recreation and Parks. Mark will discuss ways our club can interact with the nature center. Hospitality and club bookstore 7:30 PM; meeting/program 8 PM at the Howard Co Rec and Parks Headquarters, 7210 Oakland Mills Rd, Columbia. Info: Ward Ebert, 301-490-5807.

Saturday, February 12

Baltimore. Henlopen, DE to Ocean City, MD. Full day. Possible optional extension of trip into Sun or Mon (overnight at motel in Ocean City area). Targeting loons, gannets, sea ducks, Great Cormorant, and Purple Sandpiper. Razorbill possible. Bundle up; this trip is usually brutally cold and windy. Meet 7 AM at Nursery Rd P&R, off I-695 exit 8 (not 8A).

continued on page 14

Calendar *continued from page 13*

Alternate meeting place 9:30 AM at the Lewes-Cape May Ferry passenger lot. Bring lunch. Leader: Pete Webb, 410-486-1217, 410-904-6314 or pete_webb@juno.com.

H Harford. Swan Harbor Farm. Visit this beautiful county park to find wintering song birds and waterfowl. Meet at the parking lot by the Agricultural Education Center at 8 AM. The leaders are Tom Gibson, 410-734-4135 or gibsonlld@aol.com, and John Gallo.

H Montgomery. Somerset Marshes. Full day (to dusk). Bring food, water, and warm clothing. Visit the amazingly underexplored wilderness of Somerset Co's marshes. Emphasis will be waterfowl and uncommon wintering species such as Short-eared Owl, Rough-legged Hawk, and American Bittern. Leaders: Bill Hubick and Jim Brighton. Reservations required. Limit: 14. For reservations and directions, contact Bill Hubick, bill_hubick@yahoo.com.

Thursday, February 17

MEETING. **Caroline.** *Danny Poet* presents "The Eastern Bluebird." 7:30 PM, Caroline Co Public Library, 100 Market St, Denton. For add'l info, contact Debby Bennett at firefly5845@hotmail.com.

Friday-Monday, February 18-21

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT.

Anyone can take part, from novice bird watcher to expert, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes on one or more days and reporting the sightings online at www.birdsource.org/gbbc/. Add'l online resources include tips to help identify birds, a photo gallery, and special materials for educators.

Saturday, February 19

H Baltimore. Saturday Monitoring Walks at Fort McHenry. See Jan 15

listing. Meet 8 AM at Visitor Center. Leader: Jim Peters, 410-429-0966.

H Harford. DE/MD Shore. Cape Henlopen to Ocean City for winter regulars and rarities lurking offshore. This all-day trip will leave from the Rte 15/95 P&R at 6:30 AM. Bring snacks if you like. We will stop for a fast food lunch. Contact the leader, Les Eastman at les@birdtreks.com or 410-734-6969, for further info.

H Howard. How to Find an Owl. Meet 1 PM (possibility of birding till dusk) at Annapolis Rock Rd horse trailer parking lot, midway between Hipsley Mill Rd and Rte 94. Learn how to find owls by habitat and signs. Jay Sheppard is an expert at finding owls and will share his skills and knowledge as to how to find different species. Contact Jay to sign up so participants can be advised of weather-related changes. Our target species are Long-eared, Saw-whet, and other owls. No facilities. Snow/rain date February 26. Leader: Jay Sheppard, JMSheppar@aol.com, 301-725-5559.

Saturday-Monday, February 19-21

H Anne Arundel. Annual Winter Birding Weekend. Location TBD based on bird activity. Reservations required by Feb 12. Meet at Bay 50 Shopping Center lot, located off Rte 50 on Whitehall Rd. Contact leader Peter Hanan, 301-912-3805, for reservations and meeting time.

H Carroll. Presidents' Day Weekend on the Eastern Shore. Bird great spots such as Bombay Hook, Indian River Inlet, the Ocean City Inlet jetty, and West Ocean City pond for winter waterfowl and other winter residents. Meet 10 AM at the Bombay Hook Visitor Center. Leader: Bob Ringler, 410-303-2792 or ringler1@comcast.net. Contact Bill Ellis at 443-520-8809

to inquire about sleeping space at his house in Ocean City on Sat and Sun nights.

H Frederick. Presidents' Day Weekend Trip. There is always something unexpected on the Eastern Shore this time of year. Pack up your warmest hats and gloves and enjoy a winter birding adventure. Leader: Mike Welch, 301-685-3561.

Sunday, February 20

H Montgomery. Oaks Landfill, Laytonsville. Bundle up to explore this now-closed landfill adjacent to the Blue Mash. Should be mostly open terrain with some ponds. Possible wintering sparrows, raptors, and waterfowl. Leader will have scope for distant birds. We have special permission to enter this "closed to the public" landfill so reservations are essential. Limit 16. Meet at 8 AM. Contact leader for reservations and more info. Leader: Mark England, 240-207-3132 (h) or 240-375-4500 (cell).

Tuesday, February 22

MEETING. **Washington.** Program TBA. Call 301-797-8454 for further info. 7 PM at the Mount Aetna Nature Center.

Saturday, February 26

H Kent. Kent Landings. The county landings on the Chester River provide good waterfowl viewing. We will visit a selection of landings to look for sea ducks such as goldeneye and mergansers, and rafts of Ruddy Duck, Canvasback, and both scaup. We will also be alert for anything else, including both eagle species. Meet 8 AM at Dollar General Store parking lot, Chestertown. Leaders: Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@baybroadband.net.

H Indicates Field Trip

Washington. Blue Ridge Environmental Center, VA. Bird the Blue Ridge Center with the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Meet 8 AM at BREC Visitor Center. Call 301-797-8454 to register for this half-day trip.

Sunday, February 27

Harford. Loch Raven Reservoir. Explore the beautiful surroundings of Baltimore's premier watershed for wintering migrant songbirds, water birds, and raptors. Meet at the MD 147/152 P&R near Fallston at 8 AM. Leader is Dave Larkin, 410-569-8319 or dlarkin@towson.edu.

Monday, February 28

MEETING. **Tri-County.** Program TBA. 7 PM at Asbury Methodist Church, Fox Rm, south entrance, Camden Ave, Salisbury. For more info contact Betty Pitney at 410-543-1853.

Tuesday, March 1

MEETING. **Baltimore.** Tuesday Evening Lecture at Cylburn's Greenhouse Classroom, 4915 Greenspring Ave. "Helping Bluebirds" with *Katherine Patterson*, bluebird trail monitor at Oregon Ridge Nature Center and volunteer naturalist and trustee at Irvine Nature Center. Doors open at 7 PM for socializing and snacks, show starts about 7:15 PM. Note: Meeting cancelled if Balt. City schools are closed that day for snow. When in doubt, check with lecture chairman Pete Webb, 410-486-1217 (h), 410-904-6314 (m), or pete_webb@juno.com.

Montgomery. Informal Late Afternoon Walks until Dusk. Joint MBC/ANS trips. Meet at the end of Seneca Rd at Riley's Lock "on the bridge" at 5 PM. After checking out the river we will proceed to Hughes Hollow. Highlights here will include waterfowl flying in to roost. We will try for displaying woodcock if they are in the vicinity. Bring scope, flashlight, and wear "muddy conditions" footwear. Reservations

not required. For more info, call Jim Green at 301-742-0036 (cell).

Wednesday, March 2

Baltimore. First Wednesdays at Fort McHenry. See Jan 5 listing. Meet 8 AM at Visitor Center. Leader: Mary Chetelat, 410-665-0769.

MEETING. **Carroll.** "Herpetology Atlas" by *Scott Smith*. 7:30 PM at South Carroll Senior Center, 5928 Mineral Hill Rd, Eldersburg. Contact Dave Harvey, 410-795-3117, for more info.

Thursday, March 3

Frederick. First Thursdays. Leader and destination TBA. Meet at Baker Park by Culler Lake at 8 AM. Return at approximately 11 AM. For info, please contact Pat Caro, 301-845-6246.

MEETING. **Frederick.** Are you feeling uncertain about your ability to help with the Maryland Herp Atlas? Come meet *Scott Smith*, MD DNR, State Herpetologist, and enjoy his program, "All You Need to Know about Reptiles and Amphibians but Were Afraid to Ask." 6 PM at the C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick.

Montgomery. Informal Late Afternoon Walks until Dusk. See March 1 listing.

Saturday, March 5

Anne Arundel. Wooten's Landing for Woodcocks. Meet 4 PM at Parole P&R. Leader: Kathie Lambert, 410-867-4056 or kbert59@yahoo.com.

Baltimore. Middle Creek WMA. All-day trip (bring lunch) to visit this major gathering place north of Lancaster, PA for Snow Geese and other waterfowl. There is also an excellent display of mounted birds at the Visitor Center. Note: Trip may go elsewhere if Middle Creek is frozen over. Meet 8 AM at Timonium P&R on Greenspring

Dr/Deereco Rd off Timonium Rd just east of I-83. Leader: Pete Webb, 410-486-1217 or cell 410-904-6314 or pete_webb@juno.com. Contact leader to learn if trip is postponed a week due to ice on lake or weather conditions.

Harford. Broad Creek Scout Camp. Explore diverse habitats of this Harford Co treasure for wintering songbirds and possible raptors. Meet at Dublin ES on Rte 136 north of Rte 1 at 8:30 AM. Leader: Sue Procell, 410-676-6602 or suzanne.procell@us.army.mil.

MEETING. **Harford.** Speaker TBA. Dinner at 6:15 PM, program at 7 PM at Churchville Presbyterian Church, MD 22 and MD 136. For info, call Dave Webb, 410-939-3537.

Sunday, March 6

Baltimore. Loch Raven. Waterfowl and land birds. Possible Bald Eagles and bluebirds. Meet 8:30 AM along Stone Hill Rd. All cars need to park on the same side of the road. Leader: Debbie Terry, 410-252-8771 or dterry12@verizon.net.

Howard. Centennial Park. 2-3 hours. Easy walking on paved path around Centennial Lake. Woodlands, fields, and water host a wide variety of species. Great view of the sky for flyovers. Waterfowl expected, early migrant passerines possible. Meet 8 AM at west end parking lot. Leader: Jeff Culler, cullerfuls@hotmail.com or 410-465-9006. Facilities available.

Kent. Chesapeake Farms. Wintering waterfowl, raptors, White-crowned and other sparrows. Half day, bring snacks. Meet 8 AM at Dollar General Store parking lot, Chestertown. Leaders: Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@baybroadband.net.

LAST CALL

... for the **Gull Workshop** in Cecil County January 21-22. Sign up with Maryanne. Dolan@gmail.com by Jan 6.

... for the **2011 Pin Contest**. Submit entries to John Malcolm at smudgie@comcast.net by January 17.

... for **2010 Locality Lists**; deadline January 21. Check the web site or contact Norm Saunders, marshhawk@verizon.net.

... for **Scholarship Applications**; deadline January 31. See page 8.

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BOOK REVIEW

John James Audubon: The Making of an American, by Richard Rhodes • *Vintage Books*. 2004.



This bird-themed book was given to me a few years ago by a non-birder friend. While I enjoyed it immensely, I can summarize its overall effect by saying that the first person to whom I loaned it is a historian rather than a birder.

Birds figure prominently in Audubon's life, but it is his life and times that predominate in this book. The primary achievement of *Audubon* is the attention given to cultural historical details.

Audubon was sent by his father to the United States in 1803 to avoid conscription by Napoleon's army, a time when little beyond the tidewater was settled. Descriptions of towns, buildings, and above all modes of transportation are vivid and convey a sense of place for that era like nothing I had read before.

In the opening paragraph of *Audubon*, we have "gulls wheeling above the East River docks" welcoming our young Frenchman, at age eighteen "barely fledged." His spirits had flagged on the long journey, but, having already begun drawing birds in France, he soon became energized by America's wilderness and resolved to spend as much time as possible studying the country's birds and drawing each in "its natural size and coloring." This desire to make his bird pictures realistic is of course what led to Audubon's fame as an artist, previous bird illustrators having rendered them "strictly ornithologically," lifeless and out of context. Audubon used mostly dead birds, as was the practice at the time, but developed a method of arranging them on wires so they could be sketched in more realistic postures. (He sometimes cooked and ate his specimens after drawing them.) He was a pioneer in the technique of foreshortening, to depict a bird in motion, and his mastery at

combining pastels, watercolor, gouache, and pencil in a single work earned him accolades for artistic inventiveness.

Readers looking for ornithological precision may be disappointed. The author is inconsistent in his use of archaic and modern bird names, and that he is not primarily a birder is evident in his casual descriptions of American White Pelicans at the Falls of the Ohio in Louisville, where listing this species on eBird today would trigger an "oops" (though it takes two for an "oops" across the river in Indiana). We are given a sense of how much has been lost in descriptions of huge flocks of birds being harvested, notably Passenger Pigeons, but other species too, including Audubon's estimated 48,000 storm-driven American Golden-Plovers gunned down in one day in New Orleans. The diminution of bird populations and the loss of wilderness in general were lamented by Audubon himself as time passed. As early as 1826 he wrote about his vision of the future, when "Nature will have been robbed of her brilliant charms..." and he was particularly disheartened during his travels in maritime Canada, where human predation by hunting was exacerbated by egging, over 400,000 seabird eggs having been collected the previous spring.

After enjoying robust health in his youth, Audubon did not age gracefully, having become naturally weaker physically but also less amiable, eventually succumbing to dementia. This process and the perceptible decline of the natural world around him, which continues today, give the ending of *Audubon* a feeling of melancholy. In spite of this, and a rather dense writing style, *John James Audubon: The Making of an American*, is well worth reading.

—Leslie Starr
Baltimore Bird Club